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■ **Thursday, September 21, 2006**

### Libya AIDS trial of foreign medical workers delayed again

Katerina Ossanova at 2:14 PM ET



[JURIST] The **retrial of five Bulgarian nurses** [JURIST report] and one Palestinian doctor accused of infecting over **400 Libyan patients, primarily children** [JURIST news archive], with the HIV virus, was adjourned Thursday after a defense lawyer did not show up in court. In the absence of leading defense lawyer Othmane Bizanti, the trial was postponed until October 31. Bizanti was allegedly admitted into a hospital due to an illness.

The retrial began in May but has been **adjourned several times** [JURIST report] in the ensuing months.

The six health workers were first **convicted** in May 2004 and **sentenced to death** [JURIST reports] for deliberately infecting the children, but the Libyan Supreme Court **overturned the convictions** [JURIST report] in December 2005 and ordered a retrial. Bulgaria and its allies, **including the US** [JURIST report] and the European Union, contend that the nurses are innocent and maintain that their confessions were coerced through torture. The defendants, detained since 1999, previously argued that the children were infected with the virus before treatment. French Professor Luc Montagnier, the co-discover of the HIV virus, **testified** [JURIST report] that the infection had spread in the children's hospital before the Bulgarian nurses began their contracts there. Reuters has **more**.

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